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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Juan Vargas
52nd District, California

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL MARKETS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL
INSTITUTIONS AND MONETARY POLICY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY,
ILLICIT FINANCE, AND INTERNATIONAL
FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

March 31, 2023

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Granger and Ranking Member DeLauro:

I am requesting funding for the "Wildfire Technology Commons" project in fiscal year 2024, in the amount of \$4,700,000. The entity to receive the funding is the University of California, San Diego located at 9500 Gilman Drive, La Jolla, CA 92093.

This project would fund the Wildfire Technology Commons (WTC) which aims to prevent death and destruction from wildfires through artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled, science-based decisions for fire mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. The WTC will provide a platform with diverse, open and standardized data, AI, and next generation fire modeling capabilities to enable novel technological solutions for wildfire management. In collaboration with key stakeholders, including the fire response and mitigation communities, the WTC will leverage AI-enabled fire science to implement a joint vision for innovative and equitable approaches to proactive management of wildland fire challenges.


This project is a good use of taxpayer resources because the WTC aims to significantly reduce destruction by wildland fires using data and AI as tools for next-generation fire models at the national scale. In 2020, the worst fire season yet, fires swept across 10 million acres in California, Oregon and Washington, killing dozens, destroying 10,000 structures, and causing \$16 billion in property damage. Tens of thousands of firefighters risked their lives to fight the fires at a cost of \$3.4 billion. Avoiding future wildfire disasters is a time-critical problem that requires practical solutions that build upon science and technology advances to understand fire behavior in our changing climate. Over the last decade, UC San Diego's WIFIRE Lab at the San Diego Supercomputer Center has developed the first digital infrastructure to accelerate fire science and management through data, computing, and AI. Their efforts have transformed the way initial fire response is managed in California. However, even the most sophisticated approaches to fighting fires are reactive and cannot always control fire under extreme weather conditions. There is an urgent need to turn to proactive approaches to reducing the risk of severe fires.

The project has a Federal nexus because the funding provided is for purposes described in section 272 of title 15, United States Code.

This project has received written support from CalEOS, San Diego Gas and Electric, and the Western Fire Chiefs Association.

I certify that I have no financial interest in this project, and neither does anyone in my immediate family.

Sincerely,



JUAN VARGAS
Member of Congress